



Cal-EPA



**State Treasurer
Phil Angelides**



**Assemblymember
Fran Pavley**

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**CALIFORNIA TREASURER ANGELIDES, ASSEMBLYMEMBER PAVLEY, CAL-EPA
SECRETARY TAMMINEN, JOIN OTHER STATE OFFICIALS AND
ENVIRONMENTALISTS TO ANNOUNCE LEGISLATION TO OPEN CALIFORNIA'S CAR
POOL LANES TO FUEL-EFFICIENT, HYBRID VEHICLES**

*Measure Would Help Reduce Air Pollution and Greenhouse Gas Emissions,
and Boost State's and Nation's Energy Independence*

LOS ANGELES – Joined by prominent environmental leaders, California State Treasurer Phil Angelides, Assemblymember Fran Pavley and California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal-EPA) Secretary Terry Tamminen today announced legislation to help clear California's air, boost the State's energy independence and cut greenhouse gas emissions by opening California's car pool lanes to fuel-efficient hybrid electric vehicles.

The legislation, AB 2628 – sponsored by Treasurer Angelides, Cal-EPA and the California Air Resources Board, and authored by Assemblymember Pavley (D-Agoura Hills) – would allow hybrid electric vehicles, or HEVs, that meet tough emissions and fuel efficiency standards access to California's high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, or diamond lanes, regardless of the number of people in the vehicle. The legislation would take full advantage of the available capacity in the State's HOV lanes while encouraging California motorists to use less fuel.

Under AB 2628, the hybrid electric vehicles that would be allowed access to HOV lanes would include those that meet California's strictest advanced technology-partial zero emission vehicle (AT-PZEV) standards and achieve 45 miles per gallon or higher. In addition, an estimated 20,000 pre-2005 gas-electric hybrid vehicles that meet less stringent emissions criteria but also have a 45 miles per gallon or higher rating would be allowed onto HOV lanes. Under the legislation, the hybrid vehicles that would be eligible today for HOV access would include the Honda Insight, Honda Civic Hybrid and Toyota Prius. As new hybrid vehicles are developed, they too will become eligible for HOV access if they meet the strictest AT-PZEV emissions and fuel efficiency standards.

The state legislation would take effect only after the federal government acts to approve the use of HOV lanes by hybrid vehicles. Federal authorizing legislation is now included in the pending surface transportation funding bill. (Federal approval is required because federal funds are used in the construction of HOV lanes.)

Californians today breathe the most polluted air in the country and drive many of the most congested highways in the country. Motor vehicles are a substantial contributor to both problems and will remain so for the foreseeable future. Hybrid electric vehicles rely on advanced technology similar to that of battery and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles, offering a transition to a truly zero emissions future.

The Treasurer, Assemblymember Pavley and Cal-EPA Secretary Tamminen, speaking at a press conference here at the Skirball Cultural Center, agreed that seeing more hybrid electric vehicles on the road – zipping by in the carpool lane – will be a big step toward increasing the public's awareness and acceptance of cleaner, advanced technology vehicles.

"Opening up the State's HOV lanes to hybrid vehicles is a smart solution that will help clear the air and reduce our dependence on polluting fuels, and save motorists time and dollars," Angelides said. "And it comes at an especially important time, as gasoline prices are skyrocketing and the need is growing to encourage clean and environmentally sound technologies."

Angelides and Caltrans first teamed up in October 2003 to propose that any vehicle meeting the AT-PZEV emission requirements and rated at 45 miles per gallon or better be allowed on every HOV lane in the State regardless of vehicle occupancy.

"This is a 'WIN-WIN-WIN' – cleaning up our air, reducing dependence on foreign oil and saving money at the pump!" said Pavley, who had introduced a similar measure in 2001. The Assemblymember pointed out that her 2002 legislation, AB 1493, requires car manufacturers to lower greenhouse gas emissions in passenger vehicles and light duty trucks. "Now," she said, "AB 2628 will provide incentives for new technologies and alternative fuel vehicles to help accomplish this goal."

Tamminen agreed. "How can we declare our independence from foreign oil, rising fuel prices, and bad air? Buy a hybrid!"

Joining Angelides, Pavley and Tamminen at today's news conference were NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council) Trustee Laurie David, officials with the California Air Resources Board and representatives of hybrid vehicle owners clubs.

"Opening diamond lanes to hybrids is a small but sweet reward for an intelligent choice," David said. "Diamonds can now be a hybrid's best friend."

There are currently 1,112 miles of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes in California, with another 1,045 proposed to be completed through 2030. Currently, access to HOV lanes in California is restricted to: vehicles carrying at least two, and in some cases three people; zero-emission and "inherently low emission vehicles" (electric and compressed natural gas vehicles); two-seater vehicles carrying two passengers; transit vehicles; and motorcycles.

Under AB 2628, vehicles that are newly eligible for access to HOV lanes will be affixed with “Clean Air Vehicle” decals similar to those currently available for electric and compressed natural gas vehicles. If enacted, the legislation would be in effect until January 1, 2008. The legislation would limit to 75,000 the number of decals available to eligible hybrid electric vehicles, an amount considered sufficient to handle the growth of such vehicles in California. The legislation also provides other assurances that traffic in HOV lanes will continue to flow smoothly.

The Assembly Transportation Committee is scheduled to hear AB 2628 on April 12.